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# A Golden Apple.

By  
L. T. Meade.



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A Golden Apple.





K. STREET.

*Flossie's Temptation.*

# A Golden Apple

by

L.T. Meade.

And Other Stories

by M.B. Manwell, Eliza F. Pollard,  
E. Nesbit, and E. Dawson.



Illustrated

by

Kate Street.

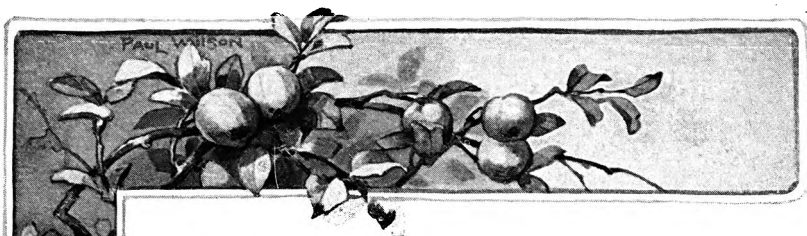
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# A Golden Apple

by L. T. Meade.

IT was a golden and red apple, and Flossie stood under the tree and looked at it with longing eyes. Her lips were within just a few inches of it, and her own golden hair touched it as she moved up and down. She wanted the apple with a longing which she had no words to express.

There was not a soul in sight; the orchard was empty. On the ground were several apples, and Flossie might have helped herself to any of them, but none was so whole and perfect as this. Some had been damaged in their fall, others had been pecked by the birds, some were scarcely ripe; but this apple on a branch which hung low from the old gnarled apple-tree was in the fulness of perfection. The red of it was very red indeed, and the golden yellow of a wonderful ripe tone, and it smelt delicious as Flossie's little nose very nearly came in contact with it. Could she have put her pearly white



teeth into it the most delicious juice would have come forth; for the apple was of the highest quality of all eating apples, and came of a famous sort which Flossie's father was justly proud of.

The little girl was tempted—sorely tempted. It would have been easy to pick the fruit and thrust it into her pocket, and no one would have been any the wiser.

Flossie was only ten years old, and she had a longing for ripe apples which almost amounted to a passion. Nevertheless, the home order was that when the children entered the orchard they might eat one or two of the windfalls, but they were never to pick any of the fruit from the trees.

"Suppose I were to shake the branch just a little?" thought Flossie. "Suppose I were to throw some stones at it? The apple is so ripe that it might—yes, it *might* fall!"

She looked with keen interest at the stem, bending her little head first to right and then to left in order to see it better; but after all she had a certain sense of honour, and knew that her father did not mean her either to shake the tree or to throw stones at the apples. If the fruit fell of its own accord, well and good; but Flossie, as she examined the stem which held the apple to its parent tree, observed that it looked firm and green, and she guessed very well that that apple was too grand and stately in its own nature to accept the ignominious position of a windfall.

"No, it will stay on the tree for days and days," thought poor Flossie; "and in the end it will be picked by father, and perhaps he will put it on the table for dessert, and we shall all admire it; but it will never, never do what I want it to do! I wonder if I might ask father for it? No, he is away for the day, and Joey wants it now. Oh, it would make him so happy, and he is so ill and his leg hurts him so badly. Oh, I do wish I might take him this apple!"

Joey was a little boy who lived about a quarter of a mile away. He was the son of the head gardener. Flossie and he had been playmates on several occasions. Joey was a very nice boy, and had always paid due respect to Flossie's superior position in life. He had allowed her to choose the games, had submitted to her little imperious ways, had often brought



her a wild bird's egg, and in the blackberry season quantities of the largest and ripest berries. But a week ago he had fallen from a tree when trying to catch a squirrel and had broken his leg very badly just below the knee, and to-day he was lying hot and feverish on his little bed in his mother's cottage. Flossie had just been to see him. She had come straight



from his bedside now. She had felt quite important and good-girlish when she brought her story-books and pointed out the pictures to Joey, and told him all the things which had happened in the stories. But this day, although it was the very end of September, was specially hot, and Joey felt feverish, and he did not care for Flossie's stories.

"I hate lying on my back," said Joey, "and I want an apple. Fetch me one of the yellowest and ripest apples, miss—one that ain't a windfall, one that ain't got any spot on it. I want to eat an apple, the very largest that can be found."

"I will run and ask father," said Flossie, in high delight at poor little sick Joey expressing a wish for anything.

So she rushed downstairs and out of the cottage and across the paddock into the big old house where she lived.

"Where's father?" said Flossie. She had many brothers and sisters, but she was the youngest of the family, and the others all combined to keep her a little bit in order, but at the same time to spoil her.

"Where's father?" cried the little girl again.

"He is out, Flossie; don't make a fuss!" said Constance, her elder sister. "We have friends in the drawing-room; don't shout in the house like that."

"But I must see him. Where is he? Can I find him?"

"You can't; he won't be home till to-morrow."

"Oh, dear! I did want him *so* badly."

"Well, I can't attend to you now. Don't be a troublesome girl." Constance was wearing her most grown-up manner, as Flossie expressed it.

"It's like her best dress," thought the little girl; "she puts it on when company comes. I hate her when she is in her best dress and her grown-up manners. I won't ask her to give me the apple for Joey, but perhaps it has fallen since I looked at it."

She ran off to the orchard and looked, but looked in vain. There was only one tree in the orchard which bore this special sort of fruit; there was only one tree which was laden with the golden apples with their crimson cheeks. There had been a high wind in the night, and several apples were blown down. Flossie took them up one after the other and examined them. Alas! the whole of them turned out to be poor specimens of the windfall order—some not ripe, some small, and some badly injured.

"There isn't one that would suit him," thought the little girl. "Since he has been ill he has got awfully particular. Oh! what am I to do?"

Just then there was a rustling heard not far off, and the sound of voices came to Flossie's ears. Constance's high-bred tones were distinctly audible.

"I wish I could let you taste a really delicious apple," she was saying; and Flossie, peering through the trees, saw that Constance was approaching what she considered her special tree, in company with a lady and gentleman.

"If I could only get you a really ripe one of the golden and red sort you would say you had never tasted fruit to perfection before."

"A really ripe one," thought Flossie. She glanced despairingly at the tree. There was only her apple which was really ripe, really perfect.

"She will take it; I know she will take it and give it to those horrid grown-up people who can have as much fruit as ever they want; and poor Joey does pine for a perfect apple so badly! Oh! she is certain to pick it for them, I know she will! But she shan't have it, she shan't!" And before she had time for further thought the large golden apple was safely bestowed in Flossie's pocket. The moment she had picked it she had a horrid sensation of guilt. She had not

gone half-a-dozen yards from the tree before Constance made her appearance.

"Why, Flossie, what are you doing here? Looking for windfalls, eh?"

"Yes," replied Flossie, "but the windfalls are horrid to-day. I can't stay a moment, Constance; don't keep me."

"How rude Flossie is!" thought Constance to herself; but then she became once more absorbed in her guests.

Meanwhile Flossie flew on the wings of the wind to Joey's house. She rushed upstairs and presented him with the apple.

"Why, your cheeks are nearly as red," he said as he took it from her.

"Yes, I have done a big sin to get it for you, and I hope you'll enjoy it," said Flossie. "I feel like Eve. She picked an apple and I have picked one. Eat it up, do!"

"So I am to be Adam," said Joey with a faint little laugh; but he was not inclined to be critical, and the apple smelt delicious, and would be even more so when he plunged his little teeth into it.

Flossie sat with him for a few moments longer, and then she ran home. Of course she had done right. It didn't matter about obeying or disobeying. Joey was ill, and the apple which was to make him well again would have been eaten by one of those horrid grown-ups if she had not picked it.

"I don't mind, I shan't mind, I'm not sorry," she said to herself; and she ran here, there, and everywhere, attending to her pets, and all the time with a high colour in her cheeks, and her eyes very bright.

"I am keeping down my horrid conscience," thought Flossie; "it shan't trouble me, and I'm not going to be sorry."

This was all very well during the hours of the day, but when night-time came and Flossie lay in her small bed in



*Flossie and Her Pets.*



the dark, things were not quite so pleasant. Once again the memory of what she had done came to her, and she had horrid dreams, during which she thought that the apple had choked Joey and he was dead.

"I wish the moon wouldn't shine in on me!" she thought. "I wish the moon did not look so angry."

Just then there came a step on the stairs. Flossie strained her eyes in the direction of the door. Was some awful person coming to tell her that Joey was dead—that the great big ripe apple had injured him? Who was it? The steps sounded opposite the door, the door was opened, and someone put in his head.

"Oh, father!" screamed Flossie with a great cry of rapture, and the next moment she was clasped in her father's arms.

"I have not seen you since this morning. I came back very late. I did not intend to return till to-morrow. I thought I would just look in on the chance of your being awake. But you are quite hot, little girl. Why aren't you asleep? It is nearly twelve o'clock!"

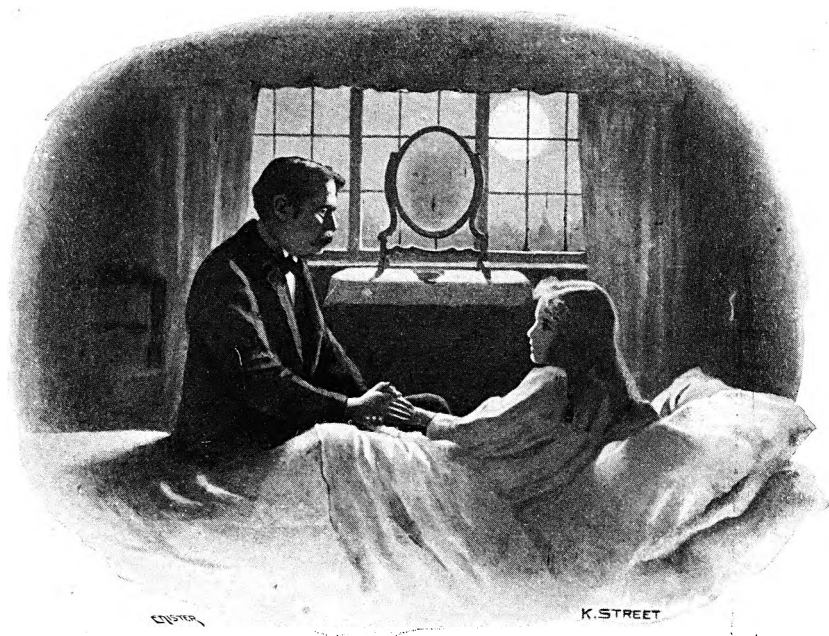
"I have had nothing but bad dreams, just exactly like me," said Flossie.

"Why, my darling, what do you mean?"

"I mean that I am bad too, and I am—I don't think I am sorry for what I have done if Joey is better. Did you hear that Joey was worse, father?"

"Joey, of course not; he is much better. I saw his mother. She said he had taken a turn for the better since three o'clock. He had eaten an apple and it had done him no end of good. Poor little fellow! it was the first thing he had taken a fancy to for days."

"And he is better?" said Flossie with a cry of ecstasy; "better?"



"Yes, dear, but you mustn't fret like this; lie down and go to sleep."

"I can't, I'm too bad."

"What have you done that makes you call yourself bad?"

"I—father, I know you will be angry. I wish that moon wouldn't keep looking at me. I wish, I wish God wasn't angry with me. Oh, father! I *stole* that apple!"

"My dear Flossie!"

"It wasn't a windfall, and I took it off the tree, and I should not have done it. I didn't mean to, only Constance came with a crowd of grown-ups, and she was going to give them that special darling apple, and I wanted it for Joey, so I stole it!"

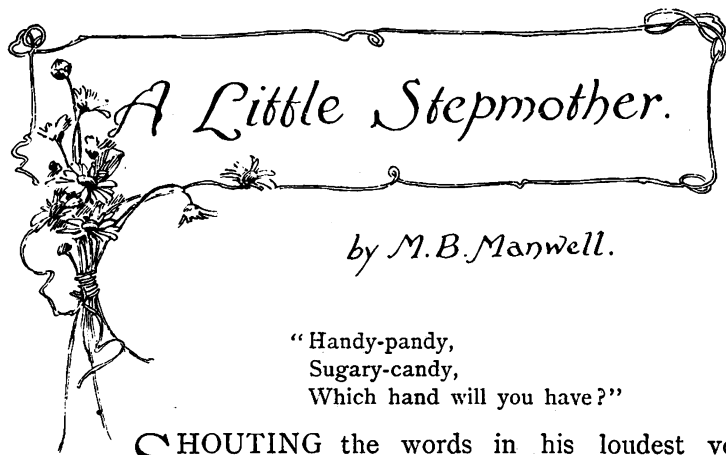
Poor Flossie burst into tears, and her father had much

ado to comfort her. He was a wise father, and, although he would not for a moment excuse his little girl for having done wrong, before he left her that night he forgave her.

"You are sorry, and that is the main thing," he said, "and it was an extreme case, and of course I forgive you, and I will give you one by one all the different apples as they ripen on that tree to take to poor Joey in order to make up to him for the pain in his leg."

So Flossie was forgiven, and everything came right; but all the same she had learned her lesson. Even to do good, to do real good, one should not go a wrong way about it.





"Handy-pandy,  
Sugary-candy,  
Which hand will you have?"

**S**HOUTING the words in his loudest voice, Con rushed into the morning-room, startling Bonnybell, who sprang to her feet, letting the Duchess roll off her lap to the floor.

"Oh, Con, you frightened me! And you've made me drop the Duchess. Oh!"

The Duchess was Bonnybell Lee's best doll, and she lived in the wardrobe-drawer between sheets of tissue-paper.

On great days, such as Christmas and birthdays, her Grace was taken out of the drawer and laid carefully on Bonnybell's little lap as a treat for one whole hour, and grand-mamma gave the time by her big gold watch. At the end of the hour the Duchess was "bedded," as old Phoebe, who looked after both grandmamma and the children, called it, until another great day came round.

It was not only because the Duchess had been born in Paris and every stitch of her clothes made in that wonderful city that such store was set upon her. It was because she



had been the very best wax doll that Bonnybell's mother had owned, the next one being a live doll—Bonnybell herself.

So, when the bride left grandmamma and Phoebe and the old home to sail across the seas with her husband, the old mistress and maid together put the Duchess carefully away between the sheets of tissue-paper. There she lay until the years brought back to the old country two forlorn mites, the girl and the boy whom the bride had left behind her, for she and her gallant soldier-husband had sailed farther away still—to fairer shores than any this earth can show.

Small wonder, then, that Bonnybell's heart beat in frightened thumps when the Duchess rolled to the floor.

"I'm 'fraid to look at her beautiful nose, Con!" she sobbed out, twisting her hands agitatedly in her pinafore, and gazing in alarm at the prostrate peeress.

"Oh, she'll be all right!" said Con carelessly.

The doll that is just the whole round earth to a girl is less than nothing in the eyes of a boy.

"But why don't you choose? Which hand will you have—right or left? Say quick!" he added, wriggling impatiently.

"If it's somefing to eat, I don't want any!" Bonnybell had lifted her Grace, whose proud nose was found to be unharmed, and was tenderly arranging the laces and satins of the Paris robe.

"It's *something* that wants to be fed itself!" mysteriously said Con, who, though a year younger than his little sister, prided himself on speaking more correctly than she did. "It's alive, Bonnybell, and starving, I expect."

"Is it a kitten?" asked Bonnybell, giving a last tender touch to the Duchess's clothes.



"No, 't isn't. Right or left—say!"

"Right, then!"

"There you are then; you've got it. Look!"

In Con's right hand was a tiny birdling, and Bonnybell stretched out eagerly for it.

"Take care! Be very gentle! I'll tell you all about it. Last night, while we were asleep, there was a most awful storm of wind and rain, granny says, and so does

Phœbe. They never went to sleep at all. And you know the Virginia-creeper on the south wall that's just turning red?"

Bonnybell nodded.

"Well, the whole of it was torn away by the wind, and there it's lying, a great heap of branches and red and green leaves, on the ground this morning. And it was so funny—so queer, I mean. A bit of a brown bird sat on the window-sill making such a fuss. I never heard a bird go on so. I couldn't make it out for a long time. And when I poked about the heap of leaves the bird got so frantic that at last I said to Joe, the garden boy: 'Seems as if that bird up there was trying to tell us something!' And Joe said: 'Oh, I expect its nest is gone.' So I looked about, and there I found a torn nest with three dead birdies and this living one! And when I dragged it out the brown bird went nearly mad. Joe said: 'Wring its neck, and throw it with the other three!' But I *couldn't* do that, Bonnybell, and the poor mother-bird looking on!"

"No, you couldn't!" indignantly said Bonnybell, making her soft warm little hand into a nest to receive the tiny stranger. "'Twould have been most dre'fully wicked. God watches over brown birds same's He watches over us, Con! The Bible says so. Phœbe read it out to me that God never forgets a sparrow even, and every one that falls to the ground He sees it, so He saw the three brothers an' sisters of this poor one. Oh, Con, let us be a mother to it and bring it up!" eagerly finished the little girl, almost shivering with excitement as she tenderly held the half-dead, half-alive birdling lying in her little palm.

"You can't be a mother to it, that's nonsense!" said Con. "Nothing and nobody has more than one mother, and this mite's mother is cheeping madly on the window-sill," he added.

"Then I'll be a stepmother!" quickly said Bonnybell.  
"How shall we feed it, Con?"

"Well." Con considered. "I think, y'know, the first thing to do is to bring in the torn nest and patch it together with



string. Then we could put the little shaver in it, and perhaps its mother will come and look after it."

But that was just what the little brown mother was too wildly terrified to do. Con mended the tattered nest-home quite neatly, and Bonnybell tenderly placed the gaping little tenant indoors. Then the children waited.

But, though her shrill piping cheeps never ceased for a

moment, the mother-bird would not come down from the window-sill. She could not trust her human friends.

"This will never do!" energetically said the little stepmother. "The dear birdie will starve to death. Con, what do they bring up bird-babies on, d'you know?"

Con was not sure at all. So Joe, the garden boy, was appealed to.

"Oh, if ye want the thing to live, missy," said he briefly, "you'd best catch flies for it, an' insects, an' gi' it any scraps ye see lying about. They bain't so terrible pertikler, birds ain't!" Joe thought it a foolish thing to want to rear a brown sparrow; there were far too many of the sort about already, in his opinion, "picking and stealing" round the garden.

But Bonnybell thought otherwise; so did Con. The two children devoted their time all that day to filling the gaping mouth of their shivery-looking little guest, and it was really astonishing what an appetite the stranger had.

"It's a most terrible busy thing to be a stepmother, granny!" Bonnybell told the old lady when evening came, and granny quite agreed with her.

"Ah, dear, yes! You little folk don't know the toil and moil it makes when the good God sends such as you into an earthly home! And yet—and yet," added granny, under her breath softly, "what's a home without the little ones?"

That night Bonnybell's charge spent in the warmth of the kitchen, and next day the nest was placed on the window-sill. With anxious eyes the children watched patiently while the mother-bird flew across again and again and again to take timid, short peeps at her bird-baby. At last she came with something in her beak, and the victory over her terror was won! The little stepmother stepped back, for the real mother was on duty again.

"But I'se glad, Con! It would have been dre'ful if we



hadn't nursed it, and God looking down from Heaven at it when it fell to the ground all the time!" said the tender-hearted Bonnybell.

And when the June days came and the air was filled with the glad twitters of singing-birds, the little stepmother always fancied she could distinguish the happy cheep of the birdling she and Con had rescued from the storm's cruel destruction.



A decorative floral border on the left side of the title, featuring a semi-circular arrangement of flowers and leaves, with a horizontal line extending to the right.

# *Marjorie's Stars.*

*by E.F. Pollard.*

IN an invalid-carriage, lying straight on his back, a boy of some ten years of age was being wheeled down the gravel path of one of England's "ancestral homes." It was early summer, and the trees were just in their freshest bloom; beneath them in the greensward, which stretched as far as the eye could see, the wildflowers grew in rich profusion.

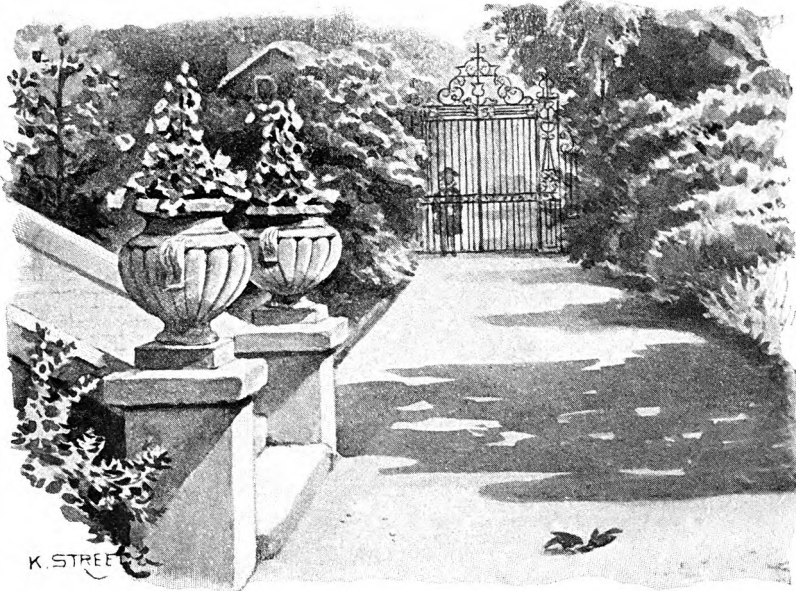
"I'm dreadfully tired of all this, Marshon," said a plaintive voice, addressing itself to the nurse.

"Well, Master Eric, I do not know what pleases you: you wanted to come out, and now you are out you want to go in," said his nurse.

She spoke gently, but with a little tone of reprimand, and the boy sighed. They were approaching the park gates, on one side of which there was a pretty lodge, covered with creepers, with a little garden all round it, full of rose-trees and white lilies, which scented the air. Just as they reached the

gate, Eric saw a nicely-dressed little girl looking through the bars. She might have been about seven years old; but she was very small, very white, and thin.

She wore a black frock and hat; but, nevertheless, it was a bright little face with a natural, happy look in the eyes. She held a great bunch of wildflowers in her hands, and was staring into the park as if she had never seen anything so



beautiful. The lodge-keeper, upon hearing the wheels of the invalid-carriage on the gravel, came out and dropped a curtsy.

"Hope you are better to-day, sir," she said, addressing Eric.

"Thank you, Watson," he answered. "I was just telling nurse that I was tired of the park—tired of everything."

"Tired of the park!" said a little voice; "I wish I could

get into it." And three pairs of eyes were turned upon the diminutive maiden staring through the bars of the gate.

"Let her in!" said Eric; "and let me out!"

"Master Eric, it is too hot on the high-road. We must keep under the trees," said the nurse.

He groaned and wearily turned his head on one side. In the meantime the lodge-keeper opened the gate, and, speaking to the child, said: "You may come in if you like; the young master says so."

"Is that little boy the master?" she asked, in a low voice, filled with astonishment.

"Yes," said the lodge-keeper; "he is Sir William Dunraven's son."

"Oh!" said Marjorie, and she went straight up to the invalid's carriage. "Thank you for letting me come in," she said; "I have been here just a week, and every day I have looked through the bars of the gate and wished I might come in, but mother said I could not, because it is private property."

"Yes, it is my father's," said Eric. "I want to go out on the high-road. I am so tired of the park."

"Oh, it is not nice there at all on the road," said Marjorie; "this is lovely."

"I suppose it is," said Eric wearily; "but I am tired of it all."

"How strange!" said Marjorie. "I could run about here all day and be so happy, and then——"

"Ah, you could run about; but if you had to lie still?" said Eric.

"I should not like that," replied Marjorie, "but I could still see the flowers and rabbits. Oh, how they run!" And she clapped her hands.

"Shall we go down the south path, Master Eric?" asked his nurse.

"North or south, I don't care," he answered. "Will you come too?" he added, turning his face towards Marjorie.

Nurse Marshon was only too thankful that her patient should have someone to amuse him, for he was always alone, but still she thought it would be well to inquire who the child was.

"Do you know her?" she asked of the lodge-keeper, in a low voice.

"Yes; her mother's a young widow lady, who has taken Ivy Cottage—that little place at the bottom of the lane. She is quite a lady, but they say she is very poor. Her husband was a naval officer."

Marjorie had caught something of what was being said, and, turning to the nurse, with a certain pride in her manner, said: "I will tell you who I am—Marjorie Clifford, and my father was Captain Clifford. He was drowned at sea while trying to save another man's life, and we have come to live down here in the country, because my mother is ill, and I have been ill too."

"Oh, it's all right, miss," said the nurse; "only, you see, I cannot let Master Eric play with everyone."

"Play!" said Eric, "I never play! Walk beside me, Marjorie," he added, in his domineering voice, and the little girl put her hand on the carriage, and did as he bade her, whilst the nurse rolled him along under the trees.

"I think," said Marjorie slowly, "you would like me to gather some flowers, and cover you up with them. Oh, look at the bluebells!" And, without waiting for his permission, she ran off into a dell which was one mass of bluebells and cowslips. He watched her and was amused.

"Take me down there, too," he said to his nurse. In a few seconds Marjorie stood amidst the flowers, gathering them and bringing them to Eric.



"See how pretty they are!" she exclaimed, as if she had never seen a flower before. "Now we will make cowslip-balls, won't we, nurse?" They all set to work, and the dell, which had been so silent and so still, awoke to merriment, and the yellow balls flew through the air from one to another. The boy's face became tinged with colour, and the sullen look gave place to one of gladness.

"You won't say you never play now, Master Eric," said Nurse Marshon.

"Mother says the flowers are 'earth's stars,' and are given to us to make us happy," said Marjorie. Eric had thought her a sad little girl when he first saw her; but now he was convinced she was the prettiest and brightest he had ever seen. True, her face was pale, but her hair was soft and silky, and she had such big brown eyes. She looked like a flower herself as she sat in the tall grass, her little fingers busy with the cowslips, and her slight figure almost hidden in the midst of the flowers.

"Nurse," she said, and looked mischievously at Eric, "he is a naughty boy, isn't he, because he's not contented? Mother says if we are not contented we are always unhappy."

"It's very well for you to talk when you can run about and play all day," said Eric.

In an instant the little girl was up, and standing by his side. She stroked his hands.

"I know, I know it's hard," she said; "but perhaps if you ask God very much, if we both ask God very much, He will make you well; and you have such a beautiful home, so many things." Her eyes filled with tears as if she were thinking of others who have very little.

"More than you have?" said Eric.

"Yes and no," said Marjorie seriously. "We are very



*Marjorie and Eric.*

poor since father died; but then I have mother, so I am happy. Perhaps you have a mother too?"

"No, I haven't," said Eric; "but I have a father. You must show me your mother, and I'll show you my father when he comes down here. I think we ought to be friends, you and I."

"Yes; it will be very nice," said Marjorie. "I have no friend."

"Then we'll cry quits," said Eric, laughing. "Nurse, we'll move on now, please."

"Where to?" asked Nurse Marshon.

"To her home. I want to see Marjorie's mother."

"Where is it, miss?" asked nurse.

"At the bottom of the lane—Ivy Cottage," said Marjorie.

"Then I shall go out of the park after all. Bravo!" cried the boy triumphantly.

"I would never want to leave the park," said Marjorie seriously; "you are ungrateful."

"So I tell him, but he won't believe me," said Nurse Marshon, delighted at the change in her patient.

Out of the park they went, down the lane, till they stopped before a little cottage, the very smallest cottage you can imagine, at the gate of which stood a lady in black, who, when she saw Marjorie, came out to meet her.

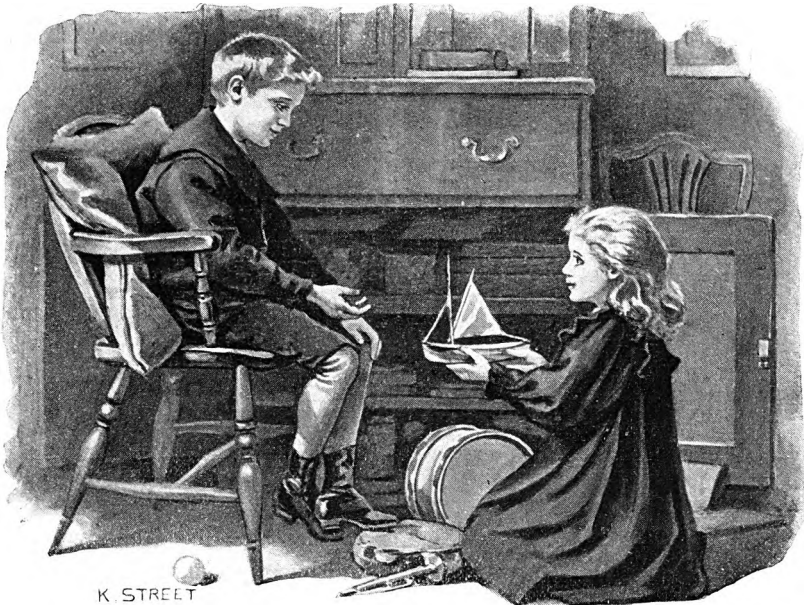
"Where have you been?" she asked. "I have been anxious about you, my child."

"Oh, mother, I met this little boy: the beautiful park is his. You know how I have wanted to go into it, and he was tired of it, and wanted to go out into the lane; but he let me in, and I have gathered all these flowers, and now he has come to see you, and we are to be friends, because he has no mother and I have no father."

She lowered her voice as she said the last words, and looked timidly at her mother as if she were afraid of hurting her.

Mrs. Clifford flushed slightly and went out into the road to speak to Eric.

"Thank you for letting my little girl go into your park," she said; "she has so wished it. We have such a



K. STREET

very little garden, and the lane, though the hedges are green, is not a very nice place."

"I am glad she should come," said Eric; "it is so dull being alone. May she come every day when I go out?"

"I shall be very glad for her to do so, for she has been ill, and it will do her good," said Mrs. Clifford.

"Then I will fetch her to-morrow," said Eric, and his face was no longer sullen, but quite bright.

"Good-bye, Marjorie." He held out his hand to her, but she stood on tiptoe and kissed him. He raised his cap to Mrs. Clifford, saying: "Thank you."

From henceforth the monotony of his life was broken; he felt that he had someone to take care of, someone to help, something to do. He was really tired of himself: everybody thought of him, everybody waited on him. He had had a bad fall a year ago and hurt his spine, and it was a question whether he would ever be well again, and people said it was very sad, because he was the only son and heir of Sir William Dunraven.

Surely it would have been sadder if he had been a poor boy! Then he would have lacked many things to ease his sufferings. His greatest need now was to think less of himself, and more of others; and this was what Marjorie's coming taught him. The going-out was no longer a burden to him, for Marjorie must be fetched, and sometimes in the afternoons his carriage would be rolled into the little garden, and they would all have tea together, and Marjorie's little face, which had been so pale, was soon brown and rosy.

"It is all the park you were so tired of, Eric," she would say, laughing. The boy was glad, and he himself grew stronger, because he was happier. When his father came down he was well pleased that his son should have this new interest, and listened to all he had to tell of his new friend.

"Marjorie is just like a little sister," he said; "when I am in pain she sits beside me and holds my hand and is sorry. Other people are sorry, but not in the same way; it is as if she knew."

"You must take me to the cottage," Sir William Dunraven

said; "I think I knew Marjorie's father." It turned out that Captain Clifford and Sir William Dunraven had been school friends, and after a few months a very wonderful thing happened. Sir William told Eric that Marjorie would come and live always at the big house, and be a real sister to him, because he was going to marry Mrs. Clifford. Eric and Marjorie were very happy, and made plans of all the many things they would do together, and Eric cleared out drawers in the school-room for Marjorie's books and playthings; and, though for a long time he had still to suffer much pain before he was quite well and strong, he was never again as tired as he used to be, because he had his little sister to think about and to watch.

"God sent Marjorie to me to comfort and make me contented," he said to his father one day. "She does so enjoy things. Everything is beautiful and pleasant in her eyes, and she has made me see them in the same way."

"The discontented are always blind," answered his father; "it is a great thing to see and feel that all God does is well done!"

So it was that Eric learnt that out of his pain and loneliness flowers had sprung up, and he called them always "Marjorie's stars."





# *The Sleeping Fairy*

by  
*E. Nesbit.*

HERE was once a poor fairy who offended a wicked enchanter, and he sent her to sleep, just as though she had been a Sleeping Beauty, only instead of sleeping for a hundred years she slept for five hundred. And when she went to sleep the world was full of fairies, but when she woke again there seemed to be no fairies left, and, what was worse, nobody even believed in fairies any more.

The poor little fairy saw many strange things—steam-engines, telegraph-posts, phonographs, and photographers' shops—but nowhere could she find anyone who believed in fairies.

At last she sank down quite weary and sad in the heart of a red rose that grew in the centre of a red-rose garden, and as she lay there she saw a lover pass. As he passed he sighed and said: "If only Dulcibella would love me! For I love her better than life itself!" And the fairy heard.

And presently that same Dulcibella came by. She wore

a white gown with a golden girdle, and she looked sad too, and she said: "Ah! if Ferdinand only loved me! For I love him better than life itself."

Then the fairy flew on to Dulcibella's shoulder and whispered: "He loves you!"

And afterwards the fairy flew to Ferdinand, who was mooning all alone by the fountain where the goldfish lived, and whispered in his ear: "She loves you."

And then the fairy flew back to nestle in the dewy heart of the red rose.

In the evening, when the sun shone yellow and the shadows were long and black, Ferdinand and Dulcibella met in the rose-garden.

And, instead of passing each other with looks turned away, as they had been used to do in the time when they did not know each other's hearts, they caught each other's hands and looked deep in each other's eyes.

"I love you," said he.

"I know it," she said, "and I love you."

"I know that too," he answered.

"How do you know it?" they both asked together.

And both together answered: "I think a fairy must have whispered it to me."

So now the poor fairy was happy, for here at last were two people who believed in her.

And the lovers were happy, because they believed not only in the fairy, but in each other.



## *A Point of Honour.*

*by E. Dawson.*

“**B**UT it isn't mine,” said Connie, who had just dismounted from a bicycle.

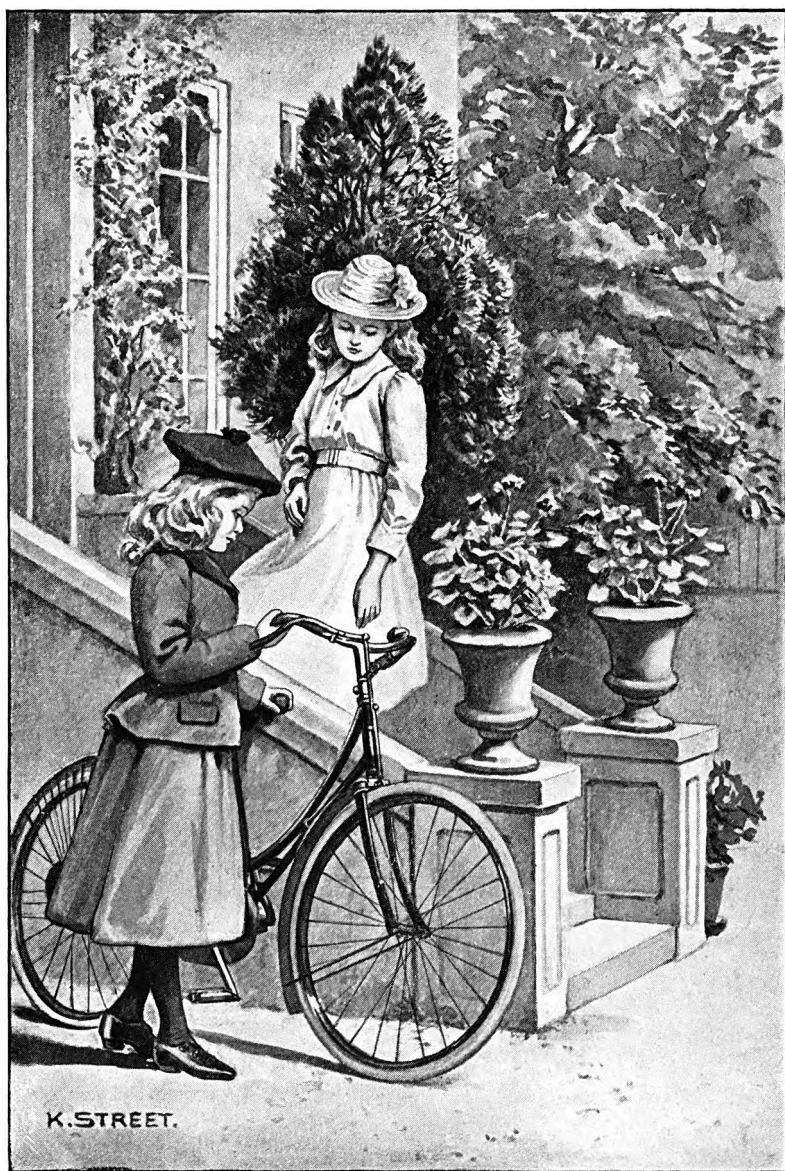
“Well, it's yours for the time, anyhow,” said her friend, Alice Forrester. “I'm awfully glad you've brought it. We shall have some jolly rides now the boys are at home.”

“But May only lent it to me to ride over here, because father had to take the pony to drive somewhere on the other side to see a patient. Mother said I couldn't come till to-morrow, and then May said I might go on her bicycle. It's very kind of her, because, you see, it's quite a new one, and she has only used it once herself. She became ill very soon after her birthday, when Uncle John sent it to her as a present.”

Alice was not very greatly interested in this explanation.

“Well, you've brought it,” she said. “Come in; someone will take it round to the coach-house presently.”

Connie propped the bicycle against the steps and followed



*Connie propped the bicycle against the steps.*

her friend into the big square hall, which seemed spacious and magnificent after the cramped little passage to which she was accustomed at home.

She did not like leaving the bicycle in that careless way, and would much rather have taken it to the coach-house herself. But she did not say so.

Alice led her into the drawing-room, where her mother was sitting. Again Connie was conscious of the difference between her home and that of her friend.

"And how did you come over, my dear?" asked Alice's mother.

Connie explained again, and Mrs. Forrester looked rather surprised.

"And you rode six miles all alone!" she said. "I could have sent the carriage over for you if I had known about your difficulty."

"Oh, I enjoyed it," said Connie. "I don't often have the chance of a bicycle ride."

"Well, I expect Alice and the boys will be only too glad to do some bicycling now," said Mrs. Forrester.

When Connie went to bed that night she felt in quite a whirl of excitement. This had been a wonderful day in her usually quiet life. First there had been the waking to the knowledge that the time she had been so looking forward to had come at last, and that she was really going to visit Alice Forrester in her country home. There was to be a large party next day—Alice's twelfth birthday—and all "sorts of fun," as her friend had said.

Then Connie thought of her cruel disappointment when her father had told her at breakfast that she could not go that day, and of May's unexpected offer. She also thought of the delightful sense of importance and adventure with which she had set forth on her journey, after her mother's objections had

been overcome, and the carrier had been told to call for her luggage.

Then she thought of the ride along the smooth high-road, through the villages which were almost new to her, till at last she had turned in through the big gates and was met by Alice, who had seen her coming up the drive.

Connie thought how much she envied Alice, who seemed to have everything she wanted. How much nicer it would be to live in this lovely house, with its wide gardens, than in that little house in the town street, which had no garden at all! How much nicer it would be if her parents were rich like Alice's, and if they could afford to buy all the lovely things which seemed so much a matter of course here, instead of always being poor and having to do without things! How much nicer it would be, too, to have brothers full of fun and frolic, as Alice had!

Alice was quite a new friend. She had come as a weekly boarder to the school Connie went to in the town, just after the Christmas holidays. A sudden friendship had been struck up between the girls, and Connie had had a cordial invitation to spend a week of the Easter holidays at Garholme, and to be present as a guest at the birthday party. Well, if all days were to be like this, she would enjoy herself. Thinking over all these things, she fell asleep.

The next night she was almost too tired to think at all. The birthday party had been a great success, and the dancing and games had been kept up till quite late. Connie had heard one of the boys call her "a jolly girl," and she had been as happy as she could be.

"We are all going bicycling to-day," announced Alice's eldest brother, Sydney, next morning, coming in soon after breakfast. "Get ready, girls. Father is going to ride over to Tambrook, and he says if we like to meet him there he'll give



us lunch at the inn. Jolly, I call it! It's a fine day for a spin, and the roads are just right."

"What fun!" said Alice. "When shall we start, Syd?"

"Now," was the answer. "Father's horse will be round waiting for him in half an hour. Let us get off before him. Hurry up, girls!"

"I'm afraid I shall not be able to go with you," said Connie.

"You will not be able to go! Why not, Connie?" asked Alice.

"I haven't a bicycle," said Connie miserably. "It is May's."

"Nonsense!" said her friend. "What does that matter? She lent it to you, didn't she?"

"Only to come here, because there was no other way," said Connie.

"Did she say you weren't to use it?" asked Sydney.

"No," said Connie. "But, you see, it's new, and I don't think I ought to."

"Well, don't tell her," said Sydney coolly. "She'd never know. Now, don't waste time."

"I oughtn't to go really," said Connie.

"Well, you'll just spoil everybody's pleasure," said Alice crossly. "I want to go, of course."

"There's always a fuss with girls," said Sydney. "Well, are you coming, or are you not?"

It was Sydney who had called her "a jolly girl" last night.

Now both Alice and he were vexed with her. They would think her disagreeable if she did not go. After all, why shouldn't she go? One more ride would not harm the bicycle.

Connie's hesitation was over.

"I'll go," she said.

Once on the bicycle and moving quickly along, Connie forgot her scruples.



"You're a better rider than Alice," said Sydney, who was in high good humour again. "You came up that hill finely. Where's your own machine?"

"I haven't one of my own," said Connie. "The girls at school lend me theirs sometimes, and when I have any pocket-money to spare I hire one."

"Well, I call it a shame your father doesn't give you one," said Sydney.

Connie did not answer. She knew that her father would give her one if he could.

The expedition was a great success, and bicycling now became the favourite amusement.

Connie said to herself that she could not possibly refuse to use May's bicycle after she had once given in; and she determined to enjoy herself and think no more about it.

The days flew away much too quickly, till at last Connie only had one more day to spend at Garholme.

"We'll have a long ride to-day," said Sydney. "Where shall we go, Connie?"

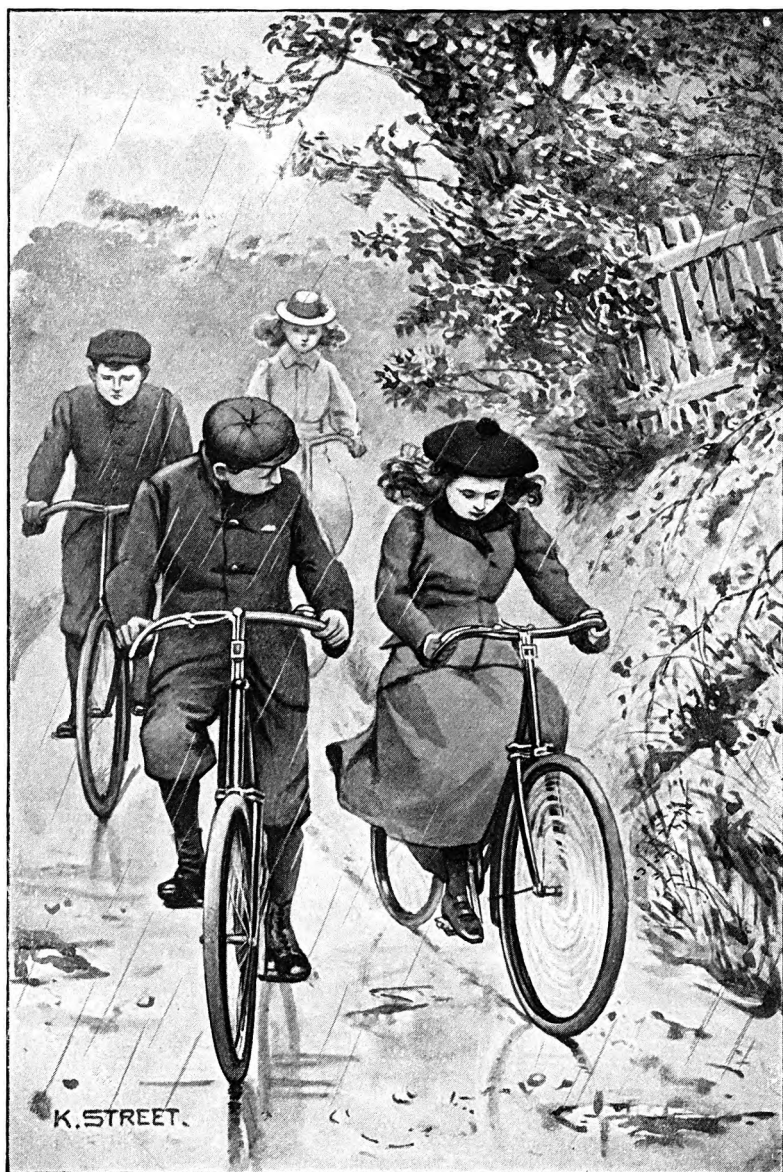
"There is going to be a change in the weather before long," said Mr. Forrester, who overheard. "You must not go far."

"Oh, bother the weather!" said Sydney, when his father was out of hearing. "It won't rain to-day, and father and mother are going out to lunch, so we needn't be in. We'll go to Burremouth. We can get back by tea-time."

Tom and Alice were quite ready to agree to this plan.

"Don't say where we are going," Sydney directed. "Father has some idea that it's going to rain, and we might be forbidden to go. But it will be all right."

Burremouth was a little seaside place at the end of a long valley, some ten miles distant from Garholme. Connie had been there two or three times by train, such expeditions always being looked upon as a great treat. But to ride there on a bicycle was a joy she had never anticipated. She had quite kept up her reputation for being a jolly girl, and was enjoying her popularity with the boys. Of course she could not refuse



*Caught in the Storm.*

to go. The ride to Burrsmouth was all down hill, and they arrived there very quickly. The first thing was to repair to a pastrycook's and satisfy their hunger.

"Then we'll just take a turn on the sea front and start for home," said Sydney, who was quite taking charge of the party.

But it was not very pleasant on the sea front, for the wind was blowing in gusts, and there was no shelter.

"It looks rather like rain," remarked Sydney, surveying the drifting clouds. "Perhaps we'd better start off."

As a matter of fact, the rain had begun, and the wind was certainly rising.

There was a long walk of more than a mile up the first hill. By the time they reached the top of this a steady driving rain was falling, and only the high banks between which the road wound sheltered them from the wind.

"We must get on," said Sydney, preparing to mount his bicycle.

"Hadn't we better go back?" suggested Connie.

Visions of spoiled clothes and a damaged bicycle were filling her mind.

"Go back! That's like a girl!" said Sydney, with contempt. "You're not that sort surely, Connie! Why, we shall be home in an hour, and then it's easy to put on dry things. Who cares about a little rain?"

Connie felt that it was useless to say more. What did Sydney or Alice or Tom know about the difficulties of replacing spoiled clothes?

And they would only have laughed if she had suggested that May's bicycle must not get wet.

So they all went on rather silently and slowly, for the storm increased, and the roads became very slippery. There were two miles of open moorland before them, and here the



wind was in their faces, and further progress became impossible.

"What *shall* we do?" said Alice.

There was a small farm-house just off the road, and after a hasty consultation it was decided that they should go there and ask for shelter.

"You girls can't ride in the teeth of this wind," said Sydney. "Who was to know it would be such a storm?"

After they had spent an hour at the farm-house drying their clothes as well as they could, it was arranged that the farmer should drive the little party home in his farm cart, with such protection from the wet as sacks and shawls could give them.

"But the bicycles?" said Connie, who was thoroughly miserable.

"They must be left here, of course, for to-day," said Sydney. "Don't make difficulties! We'll send over for them to-morrow."

Connie thought of the mud and the wet which would rust on May's new bicycle. It was taken with the others to a cart-shed, and she had no opportunity to go and wipe it dry.

She was quite silent all the way back. It happened that the children got home before their parents, and that no questions were asked.

Sydney told his father that they had been overtaken by the rain on the moor and had driven home.

"You were wrong to go so far," said Mr. Forrester, quite unconscious that they had gone just double the distance. "But you did wisely. John shall go with the cart for the bicycles to-morrow."

"So it's all ended happily, like the fairy tales," said Sydney afterwards to the girls.

But poor little Connie did not think so. She had been woefully regarding a coat with the velvet collar quite spoiled, and a skirt which had shrunk after its soaking. She knew that she had no others to take the place of these, and that she did not want to explain to her mother how she had happened to get so wet.

All the pleasure of her visit seemed to have gone that last night. She did not care for the card games in the drawing-room, or for Sydney's jokes; and even when Mrs. Forrester said she must come again in the summer holidays the thought brought her no joy.

Everybody noticed how quiet she was, but Alice thought she was only tired and did not want her mother to ask questions.

Connie dreaded to see the bicycle next day, but she had no opportunity to examine it; for the cart which brought it with the others from the farm was to take Connie's belongings to her home, while she was to be driven in the pony-trap.

"I wish I could have got the bicycle cleaned up," said Connie to Alice. "What will May think when she sees it?"

"Oh, can't you get someone just to give it a polish?" said Alice carelessly. "It's gone now, for father said John was to start directly. He had to call somewhere on the way in."

"I wish I had never used it!" said Connie.

"What's the good of wishing that?" said Alice. It was a question to which there was no answer.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Connie got home May and her mother were having tea together by the drawing-room fire. May was still an invalid, and looking thin after her long illness, but she had made great progress since Connie saw her a week before.

"There's something lovely going to happen, Con," said May, after a few minutes' talk. "You'll never guess!"

Connie looked from May to her mother.

"You are not going to be told yet," continued May. "But who do you think is here?—Uncle John!"

"He is staying for two nights," explained their mother. "He came to see May really. He had to come to this part of the country in any case."



Connie felt a cold shiver.

Uncle John was May's godfather, and it was he who had given her the bicycle.

"Aren't you glad?" asked May.

"Yes," answered Connie hesitatingly.

"You will be when you know the secret," said May.

But poor Connie's worst fears were to be realised. Uncle John came in just as the cart with the luggage drew up to the door.

The box and the bicycle were brought inside.

Presently Connie was called out.

"Is this your sister's bicycle?" said Uncle John.

Connie looked. The machine was spattered with mud all over. There were spots of rust on the bright nickel, and one of the pedals was bent as if it had had a blow. It would never look new any more.

"It must have had a bang in the cart," said Connie faintly, when the damage was pointed out.

"It could not have got rusted and muddy in the cart," said Uncle John severely, looking at Connie.

Then Connie fled upstairs and threw herself on her bed in a flood of tears.

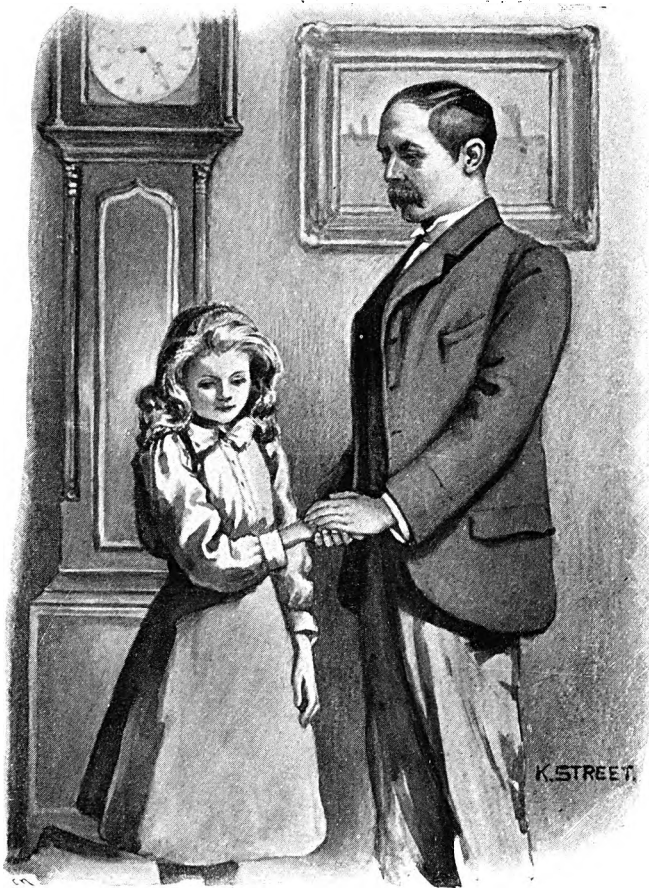
Some time later on her mother came up to see what she was doing.

"Tell me what happened, Connie," she said. "Poor May is terribly upset, and your uncle is very angry."

Then Connie confessed.

"It was dishonourable to use the bicycle when you knew you should not," said her mother, "even though the temptation was very great. Uncle John was going to give you one, too. That was the secret; but I'm afraid you will not get it now. May's is to be all put right again."

This was what comforted Connie. For if Uncle John



had not chanced to be there it might never have been made right.

Connie lifted up her head and wiped away her tears. Then she went to May and told her all about it too.

Next day when Uncle John was going he took Connie's hand in his. "Because it will give your sister pleasure to have

a companion with her, I am going to send you a bicycle," said he. "But I hope you will remember that it is not because you deserve it."

There was a twinkle in his eyes as he spoke, but Connie did not see it.

"I know I don't, uncle," she answered, with downcast eyes.

Then Uncle John laid his two hands on her shoulders.

"Always ride straight," he said. "Then you *will* deserve it."

And Connie, looking up into the keen grey eyes, understood what he meant.

